

Flint Hills Bible Church
Biblical Soul Care Sunday School
Resolving Conflict Chapter 4: Loving Forbearance

I. Introduction

We have reached the final of our four prerequisites of Biblical conflict resolution. Lou Priolo derives these four character traits from Ephesians 4:1-3

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Humility, gentleness, patience and loving forbearance. These are the four necessary traits that must be the character of a man or woman seeking to resolve conflict God's way. Let's take a brief moment to reflect on what we have learned over the last few weeks.

Humility is the mindset of a servant. The humble person considers God and others as more important than himself. He seeks the glory of God and the good of others in all things.

Gentleness is godly restraint of power, emotions, and intellect to be used for righteous ends.

Patience is enduring with confident assurance of God's faithfulness, wisdom and goodness in the midst of difficult, painful, or annoying circumstances.

And that brings us to loving forbearance.

II. Loving Forbearance Defined

Following the pattern of the first three chapters, Lou Priolo gives multiple definitions of forbearance. Not all of them exactly apply to conflict resolution, but they are all important facets of loving forbearance necessary for believers.

A. "Forbearance is the ability to recognize and appreciate the fact that God has made each person different." 1 Cor. 12:14-20

1. How can forbearance according to this definition be helpful in resolving conflicts?

Having the wisdom to know and recognize that God makes people with different perspectives and opinions can help us to expect disagreements in our relationships. This is something that we can and should be thankful for, because God, in His divine wisdom and sovereignty does all things well.

B. Forbearance is the ability to distinguish sin issues from nonsin issues. James 4:11-12

Scenario: Kevin and Dinah are a married couple in their 50s. Their local church is seeing an influx of new college students and young married couples. As leaders in the church, Kevin and Dinah are involved in engaging these newcomers and welcoming them to the church. They have noticed several trends in the young people including visible tattoos, very casual and questionable clothing, talk of drinking beer, and some even have the nerve to question the music selections during congregational singing.

2. Which of these issues are sinful behaviors and attitudes that Kevin and Dinah need to address with the newcomers? How should Kevin and Dinah go about having these conversations?

3. Would it ever become necessary to address the non-sin issues that Kevin and Dinah are seeing in the newcomers?

C. Forbearance is a willingness to allow others the freedom to develop and express their own unique lifestyles within the framework of Scripture without passing judgment on them or holding them in contempt. Romans 14:1-6

Scenario: Benny and Leslie are the parents of 3 young children who go to the neighborhood public school. Danny and Melody have 4 children who are all homeschooled. Bobby and Allie have them both beat with 6 children who all attend the private Christian school in town. Danny and Melody recently heard a sermon online in which the pastor describes public schools as indoctrination centers that no Christian family should take part in. Imagine the conversation that takes place the next Sunday when these three couples are discussing education choices.

4. How might each couple be tempted to judge or hold the others in contempt? How should they show loving forbearance to one another?

Benny and Leslie (public school):

Danny and Melody (homeschool):

Bobby and Allie (private school):

“Here is the bottom line for both: Don’t you dare presume to judge...another’s actions...or opinions....without the authorization of Scripture!” pg 96

“Putting this all together, to be forbearing is to put up with (not to judge uncharitably or hold in contempt) the lawful lifestyles of other believers, remembering that God has accepted them.” pg 97

D. Forbearance is the ability in close relationships to distinguish swing issues from fire issues.

“A swing issue is a matter (not involving sin) in which I can easily go both ways. The person with whom I am in conflict may prefer to go in one direction while I prefer to go in another; but, because I am a forbearing person, I will “swing with it.” If it means that much to you I am willing to yield my personal desires to yours in order to prefer you in honor and pursue peace with you.”

“A fire issue is an issue that, although not necessarily a sin, would be very difficult for me to agree to do. Perhaps it’s a matter of personal preference, or taste, or enjoyment, but for whatever reason I find the matter objectionable.

Possible fire issue: not missing church for sports or other events, not watching movies with questionable content (language, mature themes), supporting organizations (NCAA, NFL, NBA) or businesses (Coca-Cola, Target, etc.) because of their support of sinful lifestyles or causes.

Possible swing issues: Shopping local vs Amazon Prime, letting kids stay up late.

E. Forbearance is the ability to put up with the idiosyncratic swing issues that you wish were different in another person and to sacrifice your own desires for his benefit. 1 Cor. 10:32-33

5. How can we interact with those who have very different personalities, interests, and opinions than we do?

F. Forbearance is the ability to respond lovingly to the immaturity of others without lowering ourselves to their standard of immaturity.

Scenario: Edgar is a young man who has come to you for mentorship. He is a very young Christian and tends to complain a lot about his family, friends, job, classes, schedule, and more.

6. What might a bad counselor do in advising Edgar?

7. What should we do to help people like Edgar?

“Biblically tolerant people accept the fact that others are immature. But rather than censure their immature brethren or accept their immaturity as satisfactory, they lovingly and prayerfully try to offer them a hand to encourage spiritual growth, even in the midst of conflict.” pgs 103-104

G. Forbearance is the ability to demonstrate biblical love to other believers even when they are struggling with sin. Romans 15:1

We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. 3 For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.”

Summary: Loving Forbearance is the refusal to write off another person as a lost cause. It is walking with another brother or sister in Christ despite differences in personality, politics, and minor doctrinal issues. It is the willingness to come alongside another person and walk through life with a loving desire to see them grow

III. Developing the habit of Loving Forbearance

- Learn to look for the good things in others.
- Remember the degree to which God has made you dependent on others
- Consider that God might want to change your opinion as a result of your listening to someone else.
- Don't major on minor doctrinal issues
- When you find yourself passing judgement on someone or being critical of that person, pray for him.
- Make it your goal to have a biblically programmed conscience.
- Remind yourself frequently how forbearing God has been with you.